

## Secret Research at Universities

To the Editor:

I agree with your editorial ("Universities and Secrecy," Sept. 7) that opposition to the war in Vietnam is a separate and irrelevant issue from the conduct of highly classified research on biochemical warfare at the University of Pennsylvania. That is why some of my colleagues and I urged adoption of a policy under which the university would maintain its academic integrity by establishing safeguards on the input side of research contracts instead of the output end. This has been the policy of Harvard University.

Dean McGeorge Bundy stated this policy before the Senate Committee on Government Operations: "Except in time of all-out war, it has been the historic policy of Harvard University to emphasize the importance to the nation of open research in basic subjects; for this reason we avoid engagement in secret Government research, and we do not accept responsibility for the administration of security clearances of any kind."

### Scholars' Obligation

The Times rightly states that "there are times when a higher obligation may supersede the university's basic commitment to the spread of knowledge." But such situations arise not only when weapons like the atomic bomb are about to be invented. For a variety of

reasons—public health and "decency," considerateness for living persons (in political biographies), and scholarly caution among them—researchers in all fields, including the humanities, may want to defer publication of some of their findings for definite or indefinite periods of time.

So far as I know, none of us is under obligation to publish the results of our work if, for instance, we want to take them to the grave with us. We are under professional obligation to engage, as you put it, in the "acquisition" and the "spread of knowledge," or, to put it more generally, to promote the development of knowledge.

### Nonacademic Standards

For those scholars who choose to be members of a university, this process of the development of knowledge is always in part a collegial process. It is hindered when the university becomes the guardian of classified material, and when it has to apply non-academic standards, i.e., national security criteria, to its collegium.

Those scholars who wish to conduct military research, as The Times puts it, now have "many alternative institutions" available to them. They should opt out of the university, a basic law of whose life is the academic freedom among colleagues to develop knowledge.

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Philadelphia, Sept. 7, 1966

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